

# PRAY THE WORD

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*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, September 13, 2009*

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## It's Alive!

*Hebrews 4:12* For the word of God is **alive and powerful**. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

God's Word is alive and life-giving! It gives life to those who receive it.

And it is a conduit of the power of God. Specifically, it releases the power to perform what it commands.

These two thoughts come together powerfully in an Old Testament passage:

*Proverbs 4:20* My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. <sup>21</sup> Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, <sup>22</sup> for **they bring life** to those who find them, **and healing** to their whole body.

God's words bring life and they bring healing — all kinds of healing, but especially physical!

These are two good reasons to take God's Word in — frequently and repeatedly.

## The Spoken Word

The Word is not only powerful *inside* of you; it is also powerful *on your lips*.

*Romans 10:9* If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.

I have spoken of confessing your faith before. But one reminder is needful: you do not confess yourself *up* to a feeling of faith (psych yourself up, talk yourself into it); you confess what it is that you are trusting (*that* feeling is often tenuous, shaky), as an act of your will.

## Inspired Prayer

Affirmations of God's promises are only one way of speaking His Word. Of equal or greater value is *praying His Word*. In this way, you let God's own thoughts guide your words and requests.

When it comes to prayer, we often don't know what we should say.

Peter and his companions followed Jesus to the top of the mountain, where Jesus was transfigured before them — his skin and clothing glistening and shining as brightly as the noontime sun. They were stunned, yet Peter spoke: "*Rabbi, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as*

*memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (Mark 9:5). Then, Mark comments: “He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say, for they were all terrified” (Mark 9:6).*

He didn’t really know what else to say! That could describe a lot of our prayer times. We’re talking in God’s general direction, but without much of a clue as to what we *should* be saying.

Apostle John taught us that our confidence in prayer is based on our knowledge of what God wants to do — in us, through us, and around us. But many times, we simply *don’t know* what that is. Yet, that doesn’t stop us from talking!

We’re not without help, though.

*Romans 8:26 The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. <sup>27</sup> And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.*

And we have His Word! The Word of God reveals His will for many situations. And the Spirit will often “highlight” a passage as we read, and apply that word to our circumstance or need. When this happens, STOP! Pay attention and *pray* that word back to God!

Your consciousness of the word (your inner awareness that God has spoken) is not the same as a prayer. Offer an intentional, verbal prayer of faith.

The fact that the Holy Spirit highlighted it for you should give you confidence enough to pray it back to the Lord.

Are there times when we only see what we want to see? Certainly. But God can sort that out. If you’re willing to leave the results with God, don’t hesitate to pray. Along the way, He’ll also teach you to discern your own desires from His voice.

## **Pray the Word!**

A great tool for learning to pray is to simply use those prayers in the Bible that could be applied to your own situation.

The Old Testament offers many prose prayers (spoken in the course of the narrative) that are spontaneous, conversational, and passionate, such as:

*Genesis 17:18 “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You.”*

Abraham’s love and longing for his son (although he was not the son God had promised him) comes through powerfully. His prayer of love was granted, within the parameters of God’s plan.

*Genesis 18:23 “Would you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city.”*

Abraham pleaded, based on the reputation of God’s righteousness, for the people of Sodom to be spared, perhaps especially because his nephew, Lot, lived there. Though there were not even ten righteous people found there, God spared Abraham’s nephew by the hand of an angel.

*Genesis 24:12 “O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day.”*

Seeking a bride for his master's son, Eliezer, prayed for God's guidance and blessing. He received both.

Such prose prayers may often be easily adapted to our own need, reminding us that God is not distant, nor disinterested, nor difficult to communicate with.

The Psalms have long been regarded as the "prayer book" of the Old Testament, including poems of personal prayer, and poems of formal public prayer (usually identified by a dedication at the beginning). They also serve as wonderful models for concentrated, personal prayer.

The personal prayers of the Psalms teach us to openly share all our thoughts and feelings with the Lord, and to focus on God's unfailing love and persistent involvement in our lives. He can change not only our circumstances, but also our emotions.

In the New Testament, Jesus' prayers emphasized the fatherliness of God (our confidence), submission to God's will (our humility), and the power of His name (our service).

The prayers of his disciples remind us that prayer is vital for decision-making and successfully facing challenging circumstances. Prayer gives us access to God's help, peace, and wisdom. Their prayers may be used to guide us toward the same ends.

Most of the disciples' prayers are recorded in Paul's letters, expressing his great desire to see every believer grow into all he or she can be in Christ. These are excellent models for every growing believer.

A favorite of mine, one which I have used repeatedly to pray for you is this:

*Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*

You may personalize such prayers by inserting your name, the name of our church, or the name of an individual for whom you are praying. You may emphasize just a particular portion of the prayer (you need not use the entire text).

Of greatest importance is that you use them!

## **Putting It Into Practice**

During our reading of the New Testament over the next few months, I urge you to make note of the recorded prayers you find (maybe put a capital "P" in the margin next to them), and practice praying them back to the Lord.

Finally, I want to leave you with this advice from the Scripture:

*James 1:22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup> You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. <sup>25</sup> But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.*

Above all, the prayers of Scripture have application to your own life. Let them speak to you. Let them guide you. Let them empower you to be what God wants you to be.